R E P O R T  R E S U M E S

ED 018 448 TE 500 086

JOB HUNTING, RECRUITING, AND HIRING--A CALL FOR COOL.

BY- BOGORAD, SAMUEL N.
ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH, NEW YORK,NY

PUB DATE MAY 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.32 6P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ENGLISH, *FACULTY RECRUITMENT, *JOB APPLICATION, *ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, *TEACHER SELECTION, HIGHER EDUCATION, ADMINISTRATOR ROLE, FACULTY EVALUATION, COLLEGE FACULTY, JOB APPLICANTS, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, BURLINGTON,

"A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH PROFESSION-WIDE ACCEPTANCE OF CERTAIN STANDARD RECRUITMENT PRACTICES" WAS PRESENTED AT THE DECEMBER 1966 MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH (ADE). ALTHOUGH ADE VOTED TO TABLE THIS RESOLUTION, DISCUSSION OF RECRUITING PRACTICES HAS CONTINUED. AT THE DECEMBER 1967 MEETING THE FUTURE PROJECTS COMMITTEE OF ADE DECIDED TO SOLICIT POSITION PAPERS FROM CHAIRMEN ON THIS MATTER. THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS THE POSITION OF A CHAIRMAN OF A DEPARTMENT CONSISTING OF 35 FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBERS IN AN INSTITUTION OF JUST OVER 5,000 TOTAL ENROLLMENT. A DESCRIPTION IS GIVEN OF HOW LETTERS FROM APPLICANTS ARE ANSWERED AND HOW SCREENING, INTERVIEWING, AND APPOINTMENTS ARE CONDUCTED. THE POSITION TAKEN IS THAT THE SITUATION OF JOB HUNTING, RECRUITING, AND HIRING IS NOT SO SERIOUS OR CHAOTIC AS TO WARRENT IMMEDIATE PROFESSION-WIDE ACCEPTANCE OF STANDARD PRACTICES. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE ADE BULLETIN," NUMBER 17, MAY 1968, PAGES 7-12. (BN)

ED018448

## Job Hunting, Recruiting, and Hiring: A Call for Cool

by Samuel N. Bogorad, The University of Vermont

No one is likely to quarrel with the judgment of ADE's Future Projects Committee, which has identified job hunting, recruiting, and hiring as one of the four areas of greatest concern to chairmen. Part of the problem was formulated in the spring of 1966 by the Administrative Committee of ADE, and a resolution was printed in the ADE Bulletin twice (April and November, 1966). At the Christmas meeting (1966) in New York, Professor Warner G. Rice, Chairman of the Department of English, University of Michigan, presented the following proposal:

### A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH PROFESSION-WIDE ACCEPTANCE OF CERTAIN STANDARD RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

The recruiting of suitable personnel for a Department of English is one of the major problems faced by a Department Chairman. He must himself be active in attempts to attract competent young men and women, and he must also help the graduate students in his own Department to find suitable berths as they attain their degrees. Visits to the principal graduate schools by representatives of large departments and offers from departments large and small take place with increasing frequency, and at dates which fall earlier and earlier in the academic year. One of the consequences of these recruiting practices is the disturbance of many graduate students at a critical stage in the development of their doctoral theses, especially when pressure is exercised to persuade them to accept offers before they have had an opportunity to survey the field sufficiently or to be sure of their plans for the remainder of an academic year.

It may someday prove desirable to limit the period of recruiting in the interest of all concerned. For the present it seems desirable to relieve graduate students from some of their anxieties by setting a date before which they need not respond to offers made them. Such a plan would not limit the freedom either of a department to make offers or of a candidate to accept them before the date specified. It might, however, give the candidate the opportunity to delay, if he wished to do so, until he had had the chance to find out whether a number of offers might be forthcoming.

The Administrative Committee of ADE has agreed that it would be well to try the experiment of setting a date before which no final decision need be made at a time fairly early in January. The time which seems most acceptable is the second Monday after the conclusion of the MLA meetings. In 1966 the meetings will conclude on Thursday, the 29th of December, and the second Monday following will be the 9th of January 1967.

Professor Rice then moved "That the ADE, endorsing in principle the proposal on hiring practices printed on the attached sheet (text as above), should seek to implement this proposal by soliciting the necessary commitments from deans, chairmen, and other appropriate administrators." The motion was seconded and discussion followed. As the ADE Bulletin (January, 1967) reported: "Debate from the floor demonstrated that chairmen were extremely interested in a discussion of hiring practices, but that problems concerning the effect of the Rice resolution on smaller departments as well as on larger ones and concern about the practicality of the resolution made action unwise without further study." A motion to table the resolution was seconded and passed by voice vote.

Though it was clear that the resolution was aimed primarily at recruiting practices affecting graduate students about to assume what in all probability were their first full-time teaching positions, it was equally clear that the resolution contained implications affecting recruitment at all levels. I myself argued against immediate adoption of the resolution on the grounds that chairmen (like myself) of departments whose budgets for the following academic year had



c Association of Departments of English, 1968

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Association of Departments of English TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

not been stabilized as early as January would be at a serious disadvantage in hiring competent personnel if other departments were to insist with the official blessing of ADE that acceptances must be made by an early January deadline. Other chairmen objected on the grounds that their hands would be tied by any kind of profession-wide acceptance of standard recruiting practices. Though it was not stated openly, one could guess that there are chairmen who make offers on a "take it or leave it" basis much earlier than January and who wish to retain the flexibility of such a procedure regardless of its injustice to the job applicant who thus loses the opportunity to weigh the merits of competitive offers. Clearly, the early recruiters did not want their hands tied by a profession-wide acceptance of a January date before which acceptance need not be made; such a procedure would reduce (if not eliminate) the effectiveness of early offers of appointment. The chief motive, I suspect, behind the negative argument on the resolution was the view held by chairmen of departments large and small that the alleged "disturbance of many graduate students at a critical stage in the development of their doctoral theses" was of less concern than the certain disturbance of their own recruiting practices that would have resulted from adoption of the resolution.

Though stymied for the moment in its attempt to secure ADE support for its resolution on standard recruiting practices, the Administrative Committee continued to devote its efforts to the best interests of the Association, and at its meeting in Chicago in April, 1967, outlined ways to improve recruiting procedures in 1967. These were printed in the ADE Bulletin (July, 1967). Improvements in the Vacancy Lists and in the uses of the MLA Faculty Exchange were welcomed by all chairmen availing themselves of these aids in the hiring of English Faculty.

But the whole question of job hunting, recruiting, and hiring is still very much alive. At its December, 1967, meeting the Future Projects Committee of ADE decided to solicit position papers from experienced chairmen around the country on this and other pressing issues. In soliciting a position paper (or call for action or call for information), the committee raised such questions as the following: what are the obligations of the candidate and those of the potential or actual hiring institution? To how much pressure can a candidate legitimately be subjected? To how much delay and vacillation can an institution legitimately be subjected? In dealing with these and other questions, it is suggested that the Association develop a policy statement which might well be distributed to those using the Faculty Exchange and chairmen in search of new faculty.

Since I have been re-reading back issues of the ADE Bulletin for help in preparing this paper, I am reminded at this point of the pertinence of Warner Rice's statement in "The Role of the Chairman: Problems of Administrative Change," ADE Bulletin (November, 1967): "It is obvious that chairmanships differ greatly from institution to institution; and that any profile of the chairman that is drawn will be a caricature. The problems of the chairman in a small private college with an enrollment of 1000 are very different from those in a municipal university where a majority of the 20,000 students live at home and study on part-time schedules; and these, in turn, are different from those of a department of a new, rapidly expanding branch of a State university, or of the parent university itself, which may enroll 600 'majors' have a graduate enrollment of three or four hundred, and a supporting staff of fifty teaching fellows at work in remedial Freshman courses." Though we may, as teachers and scholars, declare our adherence to uniform aims and objectives; though, philosophically, we may, as chairmen, face some common problems in recruiting and hiring personnel; and though job applicants looking for their first full-time teaching positions may seem to fall into recognizable categories, surely we must recognize that any profile of standard recruiting practices that is drawn will be a caricature. How can we reasonably assume that the chairman looking for one or two persons to join a small department, say, of eight or ten members, with fair promise of early tenure, has much in common with the chairman who is looking for ten or twelve assistant professors (with Ph.D. and possibly some publications) to join a large department heavily engaged in graduate instruction? Or with the chairman of a middle-size department who hires for the most part at the ABD level (thus preserving the rank of instructor) and who hopes to develop from this group the future tenured members of his department? Is it possible or even probable, indeed is it desirable to establish standard recruiting practices to fit such diverse needs?

I leave out of account altogether the recruiting of senior personnel. The movement of an

established faculty member from one department to another to fill a specialized opening will very likely continue to be handled on a highly personal level of communication. Apart from the accepted protocol of adequate notification of intended resignation, there seems little point in expecting any acceptance of a standard practice for appointments of this kind. Indeed, as we all know, the recruiting procedure for the replacement of a well-established professor may begin several years in advance of his anticipated retirement. Any attempt to restrict the free enterprise flexibility of recruiting procedure for such appointments is obviously doomed to instant disapproval. We can deplore the unattractive methods of "raiding," but it does not seem likely that such methods can ever be successfully policed. Indeed, there may be some virtue in these methods, if they result in more concerned protection of faculty members by chairmen and institutions that do not wish to lose them to greener pastures. I think we can narrow the issue of job hunting, recruiting, and hiring to the level at which the bulk of activity occurs, the level at which the concern of the Association was first felt, the level at which the ABD or the fresh Ph.D. applies for his first (perhaps second) full-time appointment.

For what it is worth, them, my position is geared very humbly indeed to my own experience as chairman of a department consisting (at present) of thirty-five full-time members and eight graduate teaching fellows (candidates for the M.A.) in an institution of just over 5,000 total enrollment. Enrollment increases in the last five years suggest that our rate of faculty growth will continue to increase by two or three additional members and two or three graduate teaching fellows annually for another decade when an anticipated maximum enrollment of 8500-9000 will be achieved. Our four-year "up or out" regulation for instructors and our maximum six-year probationary period for tenure give us some annual turnover in the so-called "revolving bottom." Since we make a conscious effort to promote from within, we make few appointments at the higher ranks (except, of course, as special circumstances dictate). This policy makes for a high level of morale among junior members, who are reasonably sure that their path to advancement will not be blocked by appointments at the higher ranks in their own field of specialization.

Many chairmen will recognize a duplication of their own in my experience in the job hunting, recruiting, and hiring activity. Beginning sporadically as early as July and August, and in increasing numbers in September and throughout the fall, letters of inquiry and application come to my desk. Many are from persons who say they are finishing their doctoral programs, expect to have their degrees in hand before the next academic year, have had some teaching experience as graduate teaching fellows, and wish to be considered for appointment as assistant professors with course assignments in their field of specialization. Many are from persons who say they are completing all doctoral requirements except the dissertation, would like full-time employment while they complete the dissertation <u>in absentia</u>, have had some teaching experience, are willing to teach full-time programs in freshman and/or sophomore required courses, and are willing to accept appointment as instructors. Many are from persons with substantial years of experience, who wish to move for a variety of reasons: "to be closer to a good library," "to be associated with an institution that respects excellent teaching," "to get out of the South," "to get out of the city," "to get back to New England," etc. All include an outline of their background, training, and experience; all are willing to have their placement bureau dossiers sent (some send them unsolicited); most would like to be interviewed at MLA in December. And the same letter, of course, has been mailed out to chairmen all over the country or all over the region the applicant would like to settle in.

The conscientious chairman must sift through all of these letters, personally if he chairs a small department, by delegated responsibility to a committee in larger departments. Each letter should be acknowledged--in my view, with a personal reply (not a mimeographed form, and certainly not by postcard). I have several form letters that are individually typed as replies: #1-- Yes, we anticipate some openings for instructors who will teach four sections of freshman and/or sophomore English; I enclose the current syllabi of these courses; last year's salary range for these positions was so-and-so; next year we hope the range will be higher; if you are interested, submit your detailed credentials; #2 - Thank you for your inquiry, etc.; our only anticipated appointments will be made at the instructor level; your background, training, and experience will surely entitle you to higher expectations of rank and salary than we

can offer; #3 - Thank you, etc.; we do not anticipate any openings for which you might be considered; if our situation should change, we shall notify you.

When the replies to the #1 letters have come in, and the dossiers are available, a committee of the department assists me in screening them, and we agree to see as many as there will be time to see at MLA. At MLA, I see the applicants, for whom appointments have been made in advance, in my hotel room, assisted in the interview process by several colleagues present for the purpose. I tell each candidate who completes the interview and is still interested in us that we will notify him within a month or six weeks whether or not we shall offer him an appointment. I urge the applicant to notify me immediately of his prior acceptance of a position elsewhere. Now, at this point in the procedure, many chairmen (including myself up till this year) experience the real bind: their departmental budgets may be dependent upon legislatures still in session, they don't know for sure what specific salaries they can offer; they now simply have to wait until these matters are settled. Meanwhile, of course, the prospective candidates may accept positions elsewhere. The chairman with actual authority to make <u>bona fide</u> offers at MLA, without prior consent of a dean or a departmental executive committee, can of course make his offer. But now he too is in a bind: if the candidate is any good, obviously he's going to get competitive offers. The chairman who says, "Take it or leave it," and I know that some do, may get some takers; he will obviously lose others. He may, instead, give the candidate a specific period of time in which to accept or reject, say, two weeks, a month, or some other period. Then he goes home and worries until he hears. Has he dared to make more offers than he actually has positions, on the theory that he's bound to get some rejections (the way institutions overaccept freshmen and airlines overbook flights)? Very risky business!

This year, for the first time, I have been authorized by the administration to recommend offers of appointment at the instructor level without prior consideration of the applicant's record by the dean, with a consequent noticeable speed-up in the hiring procedure. But even before I could notify the applicants of our offers, I received notifications from half of those we had decided on favorably that they had accepted positions elsewhere. Nonetheless, I did succeed in getting about a third of next year's new appointees from the group I interviewed at MLA, all of whom had initiated their negotiations with the by-now usual letter of inquiry.

Those letters of inquiry, of course, continue to come across my desk even after the MLA Christmas meetings. Indeed, there is a noticeable increase in their number in March and April, some presumably from applicants who were unsuccessful in MLA negotiations, some from applicants who have decided late to seek full-time employment the following year. Experienced chairmen know that these late applicants are not by any means necessarily from the bottom of the barrel. The rest of my appointments have all come from this group of later applicants. I have not been able to interview all of them, but all have been seen by or had recommendations from persons I know and whose judgments I trust.

Over 500 letters of inquiry have come to me this year, and they are still trickling in. Every appointment in my department for next year has been initiated by such a letter. My own clear and unambiguous conclusion is that the letter system <u>works</u> for appointments at the junior level. When this system of recruiting and hiring is pursued carefully and conscientiously, a department can provide a base of junior persons from whom selective promotions can be made and from whom a tenured department of distinction can be developed.

There are, of course, all sorts of hitches that crop up. The chairman thinks he has accurately foreseen all of his personnel needs for the next academic year, and then late in the spring or summer he receives a resignation or two from persons he was counting on. That's when he's glad there are competent persons in the community to help him out of the jam: faculty wives, an ex-teaching fellow who is willing to be a full-time instructor for a year, etc. Or that's when he congratulates himself that he has built into the number of freshman and sophomore sections he has scheduled for next year a sufficient amount of fat (carefully concealed from the dean) that will enable him to abandon a few sections without really endangering the hoped for average number of students per section. Also very risky business!

It is very difficult for some chairmen to know whether there is a buyer's or a seller's market for junior faculty members. I've been getting 500 or more letters of inquiry per year for several years. Some chairmen must get thousands. Some must get pitifully few, and doubtless there are those who get none. Recruiting may be, but is not necessarily, made easier for the chairman who receives a large number of letters of inquiry. He must not delude himself into believing that every letter represents genuine interest in his department ("I am eager to associate myself with an institution of such high reputation as yours"). But many chairmen, including myself, know that they have something special that gives them a competitive edge, ranging from an institution's academic distinction in faculty and facilities to specialized desiderata of climate, scenic beauty, rural or metropolitan environment, good schools for children, opportunities for wife's employment, etc. (It is not at all unlikely that job hunting, recruiting, and hiring will be increasingly affected by such factors as air pollution in industrial centers and prospects for violence in the cities.) Whatever that something special is, it gives the chairman confidence that he will successfully fill his openings with appropriate personnel, even if he finds himself in the middle of the summer session with two or three vacancies still unfilled for September.

Unfortunately (or should it be fortunately?), there is almost nothing that a chairman knows about job hunting, recruiting, and hiring that is not also known to applicants for positions. If the applicant has sent out fifty to a hundred letters of inquiry, he knows that the letter he has received from a chairman showing interest in him is one of (possibly) hundreds the same chairman has sent to other applicants for the same half-dozen openings available. If the chairman, interviewing applicants at MLA, let us say, assumes the arrogant role of "By God, I'm a rare candidate for the likes of you, and the only question is can you do enough to hire me?" A candidate can interview as many chairmen in a day at MLA as a chairman can interview candidates. And a job applicant may well emerge from MLA interviews with a half-dozen bona fide offers to weigh and the prospect of receiving another half-dozen by mail in the next month.

What are his responsibilities to the institutions making these offers? Clearly, one obligation is to notify all other chairmen who have offered him positions as soon as he has accepted an appointment. Though the circumstance arises only rarely, perhaps we need to think through a hard-headed (rather than a soft-hearted) policy regarding the person who accepts an appointment and subsequently asks to be released (or merely quits) in order to accept a later (and presumably more attractive) offer. Ours is probably the only profession in which contracts are enforceable on the institution but not on the individual. Obviously, none of us wants to force a reluctant appointee to join his staff. But all of us want to be protected against such unethical behavior. Would we, even if we could, utilize an effective blackball? Does a department have rights comparable to those of the individual? Perhaps Committee B on Professional Ethics of the AAUP could profitably pursue this question.

Chairmen normally impose a definite deadline by which an offer must be accepted or rejected. The temptation is to make the time limit as short as possible, while still not alienating the candidate one really wants. As the Rice resolution pointed out, recruiting now takes place earlier and earlier in the academic year by representatives who visit the principal graduate schools. Presumably, many appointments are offered well before the MLA Christmas meetings. Early recruiters also impose deadlines by which their offers are to be accepted or rejected. Is it ethical to recruit this way? Is it fair to pressure a graduate student writing his dissertation into making a decision before he has an adequate opportunity to weigh competitive offers?

What does a chairman do when a candidate he genuinely wants to hire says, "Sorry, but I can't promise to let you know my decision in two weeks (or three, or six); I owe it to myself to wait until all the offers I can reasonably expect have been made so that I can make a right decision."? What can he do--except wait, or bite off his nose to spite his face? What can a candidate do who has a good offer from a chairman pressuring him for an early decision but hopes for a more attractive offer that might come later? Dare he risk saying no? Will he be sorry if he says yes? (I am not being completely facetious when I suggest that one method of insuring quick acceptances, unfortunately not available to most of us, is to offer salaries

substantially above the so-called "going rate.")

Does the absence of standard answers to these questions imply chaotic conditions in the profession? Do we need a uniform set of procedures by which we all agree to abide? Can we develop a policy statement for those using the Faculty Exchange and the chairman in search of new faculty? Has the attitude of Association members changed since December, 1966, when the proposal to establish profession-wide acceptance of a January date before which no final decision need be made was tabled?

My view of the matter, admittedly seen from a highly personal perspective, assuredly based on highly individual experience, and obviously limited by less than complete information, is that even though job hunting, recruiting, and hiring poses one of the chairman's most problematical areas of concern, the situation is not by any means so serious or chaotic as to call for immediate profession-wide acceptance of standard practices. I want to preserve and indeed to strengthen the freedom and flexibility of both job hunter and chairman. It is easy to exaggerate the extent to which present procedures lend themselves to abuse and unethical practices. The Association should, of course, be alert to such activity. But what some might regard as a process of muddling through may actually be more effective than a process created by imposed restriction and limitation. Somehow I cannot escape the suspicion that there would be an unattractive element of <u>hubris</u> in the Association's attempt to establish standard procedures. It may well be that the whole matter is a more appropriate concern of the AAUP than of ADE, though ADE should not shirk any responsibility in identification of and suggested solution for problem areas.

As I see them, the obligations of candidates and institutions, the pressures to which candidates may be legitimately subjected, and the delay and vacillation to which institutions may be legitimately subjected are all matters for personal and individual resolution. I believe we should guard against the depersonalization that seems to me implicit in the establishment of standard practices. None of us wants to preside over a "standard" department. No doubt I shall be regarded as a standpatter, or worse, by some colleagues in the Association. I earnestly hope that the expression of my views will stimulate further discussion. If factual information reveals a need for action, I am prepared to support meaningful steps to serve our best interests. Unless and until our present separate and individual procedures prove demonstrably dangerous to those best interests, I recommend that we "keep our cool."

ADE BULLETIN of the Association of Departments of English
Chairmen of Departments of English in American Colleges and Universities

Number 17 May 1968

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.